

Appraising the Book "Appointment in Dallas"

by Hugh C. McDonald — Part 2

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(Continued from "People and the PURSUIT of Truth" for November 1976, page 8)

"Appointment in Dallas," by Hugh C. McDonald (as told to Geoffrey Bocca) is a book which leaves readers with a dead president, an astute but naive sleuth, three photographs said to be taken in Mexico of an unknown person (the man McDonald calls "Saul"), and a captivating narrative filled with hearsay, opinions, and many contradictions of known facts. The contradictions are apparent to anyone who has read "Six Seconds in Dallas" by Josiah Thompson, "Accessories After the Fact," by Sylvia Meagher, "Inquest: The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth," by Edward Jay Epstein, and other careful studies of the Warren Commission report and of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Hugh C. McDonald is in no way a "kook," or a person who verges on lunacy or madness. For example, he shows unusual common sense when he refers to the Federal government's coverup (p. 61): "...why cover up? It didn't make sense.

"After he was forced to rule out the CIA, the FBI and the Warren Commission, McDonald had seriously considered going directly to the President with his information. It could be done. McDonald had enough clout to get an interview.

"What stopped him was a very sobering possibility — which did make sense. According to Herman Kimsey, it was Saul's strong impression that the assassination had been arranged by a private group. If that were so — then there was one glaringly obvious reason. These men, whoever they were, preferred Lyndon Baines Johnson as President of the United States to John F. Kennedy. Taking it one step further, McDonald wondered that if these people removed Kennedy because they couldn't do business with him, did they believe they could do business with Johnson? If that were true, then approaching the President could be very dangerous indeed — if not fatal.

"At this stage of the game, McDonald refused even to speculate about who the omnipotent 'they' might be."

The book, however, is basically a distraction; and it leads away from some of the facts that will eventually place the truth about the assassination of John F. Kennedy in full light. Hardly anything in the book would stand up as evidence in a court of law, and a great many details are in conflict with the physical and photographic evidence of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963 in Dallas, Texas.

The story line by Hugh C. McDonald (as told to Geoffrey Bocca) is that Hugh C. McDonald, at great expense, traveled to many foreign places in search of a hired gunman who was interviewed and who claimed to have killed President John F. Kennedy.

McDonald may well be an astute investigator and interrogator, but his actual words are almost incredibly naive. Referring to a story supposedly told by "Saul," a footnote reads: "McDonald says, 'This kind of vagueness is enormously convincing to a professional interrogator. If he (Saul) had been more precise, I would have suspected he were embroidering, or doing some Monday-morning quarterbacking.'" (p. 141)

Later there is a footnote (in testimony to a story about a fight in a hotel room): "I believe even now this incident was Saul's greatest source of anxiety. The scene is so irrelevant, so stupid, and leaves such loose ends that it could not be invented. Anyone who was creating a story out of imagination would never insert an incident of this kind. It is irrelevant, nonsensical, and totally out of context with the entire central theme of Saul's story. It is one of the proofs of Saul's story ..." (p. 163). In other words, one of the proofs of Saul's story is that it is irrelevant and nonsensical!

According to McDonald, "Saul" related the following: "... this man [Oswald] had no knowledge of the assassination plot but would believe that he was in the pay of the CIA. He was firing shots only to demonstrate to the President how vulnerable he was when he was not using his protective equipment, or paying no attention to the instructions of the Secret Service. The friend [Oswald] would actually be firing cover for me. That is to say, I would wait for his shots, fire immediately under them, and provided I fired quickly enough, no one would really hear my shots." (p. 157)

McDonald says nothing of a rifle silencer being used; so that it is very difficult to understand why one rifle would not create the same amount of noise and attention as another.

Later, referring to ammunition, McDonald quoting "Saul" related the following: "Saul went on. 'I would be firing a bullet that disintegrates on contact, so there would really be no sign of a second weapon.'" (p. 158)

A "disintegrating bullet" merely fragments on impact with a hard surface like bone. The small particles would likely be unidentifiable with respect to pinpointing the particular weapon that fired the bullet. However, even the tiniest fragment would reveal the usage of a second weapon through spectrographic or neutron activation analysis.

Later there is an attempt to describe the "one bullet and seven holes" wounding of both the President and Governor Connally: President back wound, President throat wound, Connally back wound, Con-

nally chest exit wound, Connally wrist entry. Connally wrist exit, Connally thigh entry. McDonald relates "Saul's impression:" "It [the one bullet] apparently did not strike a bone and drove on to hit Governor John Connally. I learned later that it struck the governor's ribs, disintegrating and did severe damage to the lung cavity. Fragments of it, exiting, struck the wrist and penetrated the thigh." (p. 176)

Now, the same "disintegrating bullet" that was not going to leave a trace of a second gun, sends fragments in two separate directions (the governor's left thigh and his right wrist) through a single 5 centimeter hole. No mention is made of further fragments in Connally's chest, other than pieces of the damaged rib.

McDonald quoting "Saul" used many words in casting Oswald as a person that was barely capable of walking a straight line. In actuality, Oswald had to be rather bright. This is evidenced by some of the reading materials found in his residence, the fact that he had learned Russian, gone to Russia and returned to the United States, all requiring ability to think clearly.

McDonald quoting "Saul" relates: "Whether or not Lee Harvey Oswald was convinced that his shots — aimed to miss — had "killed" the president, he panicked. His state of mind can barely be dreamed of ..." (p. 188) He goes on to state that immediately Oswald went to his room, got his pistol and proceeded to the Texas Theater. But words such as "dizzily," "paralyzed shock," "shreds of rationality," "uncontrollable emotion," and "crazed mind" were used by McD/"Saul" to describe Oswald. Yet there has been no evidence to show that Oswald ever acted other than with logical reserve through-out the period of the assassination, his imprisonment, and up to his shooting by Jack Ruby on Nov. 24, 1963.

Contrary to McDonald quoting "Saul", suppose Oswald had been on the 6th floor of the Texas School Book Depository. Oswald had to have hidden the rifle, run down stairs as fast as possible, and been in the lunch room in time to meet Roy Truly, the building manager of the depository, and officer Marion Baker, the policeman who confronted Oswald with gun drawn. According to both Truly and Baker in later interviews, Oswald exhibited no fear or emotion, other than possibly being a bit startled to have a pistol pointed at him. Oswald then is known to have bought a coke and walked from the second floor to the first floor.

A final remarkable assertion by McDonald quoting "Saul" is the way in which he treats the timing of the shots that hit the victims.

"I [Saul] am pretty sure that between my first shot and my second shot, the time spread was so minute that they could easily have sounded like one shot." (p.177)

"Saul" is supposed to have fired only two shots; the first hitting both the President and the Governor, and the second exploding the President's head. Then both woundings should have appeared as though they "Could easily have been from one shot." However, with the Zapruder film as a chronograph, we know and the Warren Commission knew that the time span was approximately 5.6 seconds (Zapruder frames 210 through 313). This differential in time is totally inexcusable in any document that purports to deal with facts.

"Appointment in Dallas" is not factual material. It is so full of gaps and contradictions that both the author's motives and credibility become dubious.

\$10,000 is offered by Mr. Rick Bennett of Hagorth Corporation in the November 1976 issue of "People and the Pursuit of Truth" to any person or group that can prove McDonald a fraud or McDonald's account a fraud.

A voice-stress analysis machine deals with stress in an individual's voice. Supposedly, if the individual believes what he is saying, the machine will show little or no stress; therefore "truth." Conversely, if an individual does not believe what he is saying, it is expected that there will be much stress; therefore "lies." But voice stress-analysis machines should have a large amount of testing. McDonald could sincerely believe what he is saying, pass the low stress test, and appear to be truthful. But belief and facts are very different.

It would be desirable that McDonald explain the far too many discrepancies that exist in his story. □

Some Pictures of Dallas Events and Computer Enhancement

1. From: Ronald J. Barr
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As a subscriber to "People and the PURSUIT of Truth," I have become hardened and skeptical about certain recent books and articles regarding the assassination of J.F.K.

The December 1976 issue of Esquire Magazine has published 3 remarkable pictures. These pictures are supposedly computer enhanced using the same process as NASA uses to enhance pictures transmitted from Mars.

The first photograph reveals John Connally holding a revolver to his own wrist during the assassination. The second, the assassination of Oswald, reveals a completely different expression on the face of the escorting policeman. The third, the swearing in of L.B.J. on airforce 1, reveals a complete set of different characters surrounding the new President and Jackie Kennedy.

I am skeptical because I find the first photo mindboggling in its impact, and secondly, all the originals have been purposely made fuzzy (I have copies of these pictures in my own archives).

I would be most interested in hearing your comments and analysis of the Esquire Magazine article.

2. From: Edmund C. Berkeley, Editor

Since I have been in the computer field since 1939, and have studied computers for 37 years, I should like to say that "computer-enhanced" in the case of some computer programs for enhancement is reasonable, and "computer-enhanced" in the case of other computer programs is a new way to tell a lie.

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